

other meeting with Justice Department officials—and discovered they were working out the wording on a brand new sexual equality clause for the Charter. The new Section 28 would be part of the interpretative section of the Charter, intended to guide the courts in exercising their new powers. “Notwithstanding anything in this Charter,” went the final draft, “the rights and freedoms referred to in it are guaranteed equally to male and female persons.”

Doris let the Ad Hoc Committee take the foreground during the lobbying. She did appear at the NAC AGM in March 1980. By that time, the government had had limited success in spinning the whole issue as somehow being about Doris, personally. She had the last laugh in May, however, when the CASCW finally did present its own Women and Constitution conference, which drew about 300 participants and passed no resolutions. She was right: cancelling the conference embarrassed the government much more than holding it ever would have.

There was one more act to this drama, a spectacular lobbying campaign in November 1980. Provincial premiers dreamed up a “notwithstanding” clause of their own to override individual rights and tried to apply it to Section 28. In the space of one week, with letters, phone calls, telegrams, and rallies, local and national women’s groups managed to convince the provinces, one by one, to leave Section 28 free and clear. The campaign’s momentum carried on to sweep the first woman onto the Supreme Court bench a scant six months later.

Doris had spearheaded and motivated an earth-shattering movement that led to Canada adopting potent and far-reaching gender equality protections, in Section 15 (amended early in the process) as well as in Section 28. Her wisdom in selecting the lawyers who researched the history of rights wording, past and proposed—as well as her personal contacts with civil servants working

on the proposed Charter—made possible the very powerful arguments that the Ad Hoc Committee put forward during negotiations with the Justice Department.

Last but far from least, Doris herself inspired such affection and admiration that women across the country rallied instantly to her support in standing up to the government. Her integrity and forthrightness helped women’s groups to get over their initial skepticism fairly quickly. It seemed to me from the moment she resigned that, important as the issues were, the lobby was as widespread and ferocious and sustained as it was mainly because women everywhere in Canada felt personal offence that a Cabinet Minister would insult “our” Doris.

*Penney Kome is an award-winning author and journalist. She has published six books including The Taking of Twenty-Eight: Women Challenge the Constitution, a detailed narrative about the battle to include gender equality in the revised Canadian Constitution. Her awards include the Robertine Barry Prize for Excellence in Feminist Journalism and the YWCA Women of Distinction Award for Communications. She wrote the Woman’s Place column in Homemaker’s magazine from 1976 to 1988.*

## References

Kome, Penney. *The Taking of Twenty-Eight: Women Challenge the Constitution*. Toronto: The Women’s Press, 1983.

## Popesse

(1964 Tune – “If I Were a Rich Man”)

### Lyrics by Linda Palmer Nye

If I were the Popesse,  
Yaba daba daba daba daba daba doo.  
All day long I’d bitty bitty with the boys  
And all of it would be pro-choice! Hey!  
I wouldn’t have to work hard.  
Yaba daba daba daba daba daba doo.  
I’d decree for every man and wife –  
A healthy active protected sexual life,  
If I were the next Popesse.

I’d write a papal decree on religion and living,  
Show the two could get along.  
I’d prove that women, we could have our beliefs –  
And still we could have a little fun. Hey!

If I were the Popesse,  
Yaba daba daba daba daba daba doo.  
I’d get rid of all celibacy.  
Some mad priest will want to fool around with me,  
When I am the next Popesse!

*Linda Palmer Nye is a feminist, based in Toronto, who writes feminist songs to encourage our sense of humour—and feed the fire in our bellies—because both are essential ingredients for a successful revolution.*